

**Excerpts from the Testimony of Michael J. Gallagher, New Jersey SVRS Project Manager, before the United States Election Assistance Commission, April 26, 2005** [[Click here for full text](#)]

New Jersey has traveled a long and at times, somewhat challenging road, to unite New Jersey's 21 counties and to get to the point where we are now – which is a truly collaborative effort between Election Officials representing the 21 counties and the State. Change, as is made inevitable by virtue of the implementation of a State-wide Voter Registration System, does not come without challenge – without resistance – without concern, but through an open and comprehensive communicative process with the Election Officials of New Jersey, we have overcome many of those challenges, have eased that resistance, and have assisted in quieting some of those concerns.

For those of you unfamiliar with New Jersey – I can tell you that Election Officials in New Jersey are among the most passionate and perhaps the most dedicated group of professionals I have ever come across in nearly 17 years of government work. And it has been a result of that very passion and professionalism that has propelled us beyond our differences and has united us in a common goal.

The State of New Jersey has recently contracted with Covansys, an SVRS solution provider, to implement an SVRS for New Jersey. We have chosen ElectionNet for our system and we are currently in the process of completing the joint application development process so that a final specification document can be drafted and used as the basis for assuring that the application will meet 100% of the State of New Jersey's requirements. There are multiple phases in successfully implementing a system of this magnitude, many of which are typically planned out over a 24 to 30 month period – but because of our time constraints, we have put many of these phases on parallel tracks.

New Jersey's solution is fully internet-based and will enable immediate and real-time electronic access to the SVRS by authorized State and local Election Officials. ElectionNet is built on a robust security infrastructure that will provide role and user-based access and will provide secure and encrypted data communications within the application. Additionally, security is built into the database layer that provides table and record level security for the voter data, thus ensuring that citizen data is protected.

And happily, I can honestly report that the State of New Jersey will have a State-wide Voter Registration System in place by January 1, 2006.

**SVRS NEWS**

- ❖ **Mike Gallagher** [michael.gallagher@lps.state.nj.us](mailto:michael.gallagher@lps.state.nj.us)  
Office: 609-588-4535
- ❖ **SVRS Project Office:** 609-588-8596
- ❖ **Carol Gaskill** [carol.gaskill@lps.state.nj.us](mailto:carol.gaskill@lps.state.nj.us)  
Office: 609-588-3175
- ❖ **Kathy Manning** [kmannin2@covansys.com](mailto:kmannin2@covansys.com)  
Office: 609-588-7059





## At the Heart of the SVRS Project...

**Many, many** things have to come together at just the right time to make the implementation of the new SVRS a success. One of the key activities completed this month was the translation of the business requirements into functional system requirements and the subsequent approval of these by the county and state representatives. This is a huge accomplishment! Now the actual customization of the ElectioNet™ application can begin. Another critical piece of work completed was the initial site visits by the Application Technical Support team who visited all the 21 counties, including the multiple offices in each, and conducted assessments regarding network status, internet connectivity, and floor plans.

So, the preliminary steps that will get us to the point where we have a new system to process our work on, as well as having the right equipment and software programs for it to run on, are essentially done. However, the real essence of an effective voter registration system is having accurate voter information. The migration of the data from the local systems to the SVRS is most critical ... and it takes a lot of work to get it right.

The work that needs to be done to get the right data into ElectioNet™ started in March and will be on-going throughout the life of the project. Here is how it works. Each county has three opportunities at getting the best quality data into the new system. During the first cycle, the emphasis is on making sure that Covansys understands the *rules* that each county has put in place that dictate what a particular piece of data means and how the data will be used in the ElectioNet™ system. In the **“first pull”**, Covansys collects the data in its “as-is” format and, based on the previously identified rules, creates an exception report that identifies *questionable* data.

*Questionable* data generally falls into two categories. The first category has to do with inadequate business rules for converting the data to the new system. For example, a county may have used a default date for a missing voter date of birth to allow the voter into the legacy system. In this case, it will be the responsibility of the county election staff to review the exception reports and work with the Covansys conversions team to identify a set of acceptable default values that will replace the existing data at conversion time. This will allow the voter to be “grand-fathered” into the new system, albeit without an actual birth date.

The second category of *questionable* data is when the source data itself appears to be wrong in some way, shape or form. For example, duplicate records; blank addresses and/or zip codes, the same street being entered into the county system under a number of different street names, etc. In the case where the source data seems wrong, it will be the responsibility of the county election staff to review the exception reports, identify the problem and make correcting entries to the current election database so that the same issue does not reappear during the next “pull” cycle. No vendor can, on its own, make modifications to the data itself. It cannot add, delete or change a piece of source data. *Only election staff members charged with that specific responsibility can make changes to source data.* However, election officials can authorize the application of some automated corrections to standardize the information in the files. Such a correction would be changing all “Ave, Av, Aven, Avn, or Avnue” to the USPS-approved “Ave”. Consistent formats make searches or matching of individuals more effective.

Based on input from the election staff members, additional specifications are added to the conversion rules for the **“second pull”**. Additionally, the local election staff will have corrected source data. After the second data pull, detailed data exception reports will be generated and the review/correction process, as previous described, takes place again. When the issues highlighted in the detailed reports are resolved, a new extract of data will be analyzed to confirm the changes and identify any new issues that need to be resolved prior to final conversion.

The **“third pull”** is the final conversion of the legacy system data and images into the new SVRS. This is not a test, but actual implementation, and from this time forward all voter registration data is managed and maintained in the new SVRS database.

## Most Important Things You Can Do To Make the Data Conversions Go Smoother...

— from Gary L. Bush

- 👉 **Understand the difference between the tasks of data conversion and cleanse.**  
Conversion, simply stated, is moving the content of the existing county system data element X (source) to the new NJ SVRS element Y (target). As part of the conversion process, contents of the legacy system are identified that cannot be converted in their present state. Cleansing is “fixing” that questionable data. Cleansing the data, in some cases, must be done by county staff on the current system, or if converted “as-is”, in the new system. In some cases, county staff can provide rules so that content can be cleansed by the conversion program at conversion time.
- 👉 **Be realistic in expectations.** If questionable data exists and the county subject matter experts cannot figure out how the data should be fixed, then more than likely, the conversion team may not be able to determine the needed modifications at conversion time and the data will be converted “as is”.
- 👉 **Understand the importance of cleansing the data as soon as possible.** Getting the data in the best possible shape in the county legacy system means that pull schedules will be met and subsequent exception reports will be more meaningful.
- 👉 **Understand the Exception Report Format.** The format is pre-defined, relatively simple and can be edited using both Excel and Access. This results in exception reports that have multiple uses for the county staff.
- 👉 **Understand the difference between errors and warnings.** A Voter Record included in the exception report may contain more than one *error* or *warning* and thus the total exceptions may, at first glance, seem high to county staff. *Errors* must be fixed, while *warnings* indicate that County Staff should validate the questionable data. Records noted with *warning(s)*, if not fixed by County Staff in the existing Voter Registration System, will be converted to ElectioNet™ as shown in the exception report.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about conversions

**Q: Are all the Voter Registration Records from a county's existing legacy system contained in the Exception Reports?**

**A:** No. Only those records identified by the conversion process as possibly being invalid or in error for use in SVRS are contained in the Exception Reports. Also, keep in mind that one voter registration record can generate multiple items on the Exception Reports.

**Q: Some of the last and middle names of voters contain only a single letter; is this allowable?**

**A:** While a single letter in any of the three name fields (last, first, middle) is acceptable in SVRS, the Conversion Engine identifies this questionable data as "suspect". The Exception Reports will contain first and last names with only one or two letters to allow the election staff the opportunity to verify the name. Our experience has shown that while some of these names are valid (like first name Jo or last name Li), most are not. Middle names are not required by SVRS.

Please visit the SVRS website for a complete listing of FAQs.

The following counties have gone through the first data pull, and have been receiving their data exception reports as of May 31, 2005

- Atlantic
- Burlington
- Camden
- Cape May
- Cumberland
- Hudson
- Hunterdon
- Mercer
- Middlesex
- Ocean
- Salem
- Union

## S T A T U S U P D A T E

2005

2006

2007

Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb

**03/01 – 4/15 Phase 1 – Project Initiation Phase**

- ✓ Project Kickoff Meeting - complete 03/09
- ✓ Detailed Project Planning – complete 3/14
- ✓ **ElectionNet** Demo – complete 3/16

**03/09 – 6/03 Phase 2 – Business Needs Assessment / Gap Analysis**

- ✓ JAD Sessions – complete 4/15
- ✓ Requirements Documents Accepted – complete 6/3
- ✓ Initial site surveys & site visits – complete 5/12

**05/03 – 8/19 Phase 3 – Design and Implementation Planning**

- ☐ Technical architectures & database design – in progress
- ☐ Pilot and other install schedules - in progress
- ☐ Training surveys and schedules - in progress

**05/09 – 10/25 Phase 4 – Software Modification and Testing**

- ☐ Finalize Pilot Implementation Plans – in progress
- ☐ Customize application – in progress
- ☐ Conduct User Testing ( 8/18 – 9/14)

**08/18 – 11/07 Phase 5 – Pilot Implementation**

- ☐ Host install of Hardware and Software
- ☐ Conduct final data conversion
- ☐ Train pilot users
- ☐ Validate, correct and eliminate duplicates to converted SVRS data

**11/08 – 12/19 Phase 6 – Staged Rollout & Deployment**

- ☐ Host install of Hardware and Software
- ☐ Conduct final data conversion
- ☐ Train users
- ☐ Validate, correct and eliminate duplicates to converted SVRS data

**3/14 – 12/19 Phase 7 – Conversion and Interfaces**

- ✓ Identify data needs
- ☐ Test, populate, validate, cleanse and refine data - in progress

**10/11 Warranty**

**10/26 – 2/01 Phase 8 – Project Wrap-up and Transition to Maintenance & Support**

- ☐ Accept Technical Documentation
- ☐ Complete Operational Transition to new SVRS

**01/01 Maintenance & Support**  
(through 2007)

**All Counties  
Live 12/19/2005**